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W. K. FLEMING



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LOS ANGELES



Es ist, ich weiß, von 14  
von der Art, dass die Anzahl  
der zu erwartenden Befragten  
sehr groß ist.  
Man darf sich also  
nicht fürchten.  
Man sollte sich  
vielleicht auch Gedanken machen,

BY A NORTHERN SEA



# BY A NORTHERN SEA

VERSES AND SONNETS

BY  
W. K. FLEMING



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‘WHAT AILETH THEE, O THOU SEA?’

I LIE and hearken, with ears a-tingle—  
Heart that stirs to an old-time pain—  
The sea’s breath hissed from its lips of shingle,  
And drawn an instant, to sigh again.

All night through, unspent, unwearied,  
A monody built of a baffled hate,  
Some age-long feud, incoherent, dreary,  
The hapless billows reiterate.

Is it that once, o’er your waste dominions,  
Softly, where wave on wave was furled,  
Sank a glory of brooding pinions,  
Claimed and wakened a captive world?

‘WHAT AILETH THEE, O THOU SEA?’

Is it that, when revenge was nighest,—

Eight souls left where that world had been,—  
Just when you grasped your best and highest,  
God in the silence stood between ?

Now in frenzy of foiled persistence,

Stung of wrath that can ne’er forget,  
Lo ! your voice to the star-lit distance  
Lifts the storm of its fierce regret.

Backward beaten awhile, but owning

Thralldom neither of beach nor bar,  
Still you dream of the great dethroning,  
Still your menace is flung from far.

Vain is the moonbeam’s plea for dalliance,

Spell that the soft airs seek to sing,  
To stay the moan of your mighty stallions,  
Curbed and reined by a mightier King.

Comes a day when you deem your Master,

Leaning low o’er your last retreat,  
Shall bid you spring to retrieve disaster,  
Snatch a triumph from long defeat.

‘WHAT AILETH THEE, O THOU SEA?’

Work your will—in an hour unfashion,  
Piled of the wondrous years, the plan  
And fabric fraught with the pain and passion,  
Sweat and sorrows of pilgrim Man.

Naught shall be save the loathèd level  
Of drowsing tides, while the winds above  
Flout, for sport of their languid revel,  
The idle legend of Life and Love.

Thenceforth, ever from morn till even,  
Vainly flaunting his vans of fire,  
The sun shall watch from a listless heaven,  
The vacant Desert of your desire.

## TWO BEATITUDES

HAPPY are they  
Who through slow seasons of each changeful year,  
Mindful of suns that dawn and disappear,  
And the oft darkening of the western way,  
Keep the whole Law of fellowship. In clear  
Simplicities they play  
No faltering part, since, tombed in troth sincere,—  
Immune from fickleness, toll-free of fear,—  
Something of God discerning, they revere.  
Happy are they !

And yet, ah me !  
For the deft hours whose ministries attend  
The gradual steps of Life, to mar—or mend—  
The little face you loved,—unto the free  
Frank welcome of its smile a distance lend

## TWO BEATITUDES

Of new, strange light :—‘ Let be,’  
You whisper, ‘ once I knew and named a friend,  
Too careless what unvisioned Powers must bend  
To woo her—so go poorer to the end.’

Ah me ! ah me !

Or it may fall  
That, after many days, in turning o'er  
Of faded treasures some forgotten store,  
Your eyes may meet, across the interval,  
The glance of other eyes, that beck, implore,  
And weep ; but you recall  
No glimpse now of the heaven their greeting bore  
Once down the lost glades of Love's garden floor.  
And silently, for faith flown evermore,  
The great tears fall.

So happier those  
Whom the soft touch of Death full early thrills  
With tidings of the far eternal hills,  
On whose bright slopes the flower of Friendship  
blows  
Unwasted, safe from any sunset chills,

## TWO BEATITUDES

Or breath of earthly snows ;  
Where the high Noon is victor o'er such ills,  
And, praying alway as she works and wills,  
Her perfect labour perfect Love fulfils.—  
Yea, happier those !



## AD MATREM

DEAR Mother Earth, my love  
Goes out to thee,  
Responsive, as I rove  
By lawn and lea.

With swift delight I meet  
Thy smile, and cry  
Blessings upon thy sweet  
Maternity.

From dawn to dusk all one  
Thy beauties are,  
Beneath the bounteous sun,  
Or vesper star :—

One in familiar grace,  
 Yet manifold,  
 As lights upon a face,  
 Long loved of old.

O joy to count thy joys,  
 Nor walk heart-whole  
 The while thy mystic voice  
 Entreats my soul ;—

To gaze into thine eyes,  
 Lay lip to lip  
 In deep enduring ties  
 Of fellowship.

For then my heart unlearns  
 Its ill-content,  
 And in such bliss discerns  
 A sacrament ;

When the tired flesh has passed,  
 In wistful mood,  
 To foretaste of its last  
 Solitude.

## AD MATREM

For ever steals unsought,  
By holt and hill,  
One calm and gracious thought,  
On footsteps still :—

That at life's evensong,  
Whene'er it be,  
I shall, an exile long,  
Come home to thee :

Within the quiet breast  
That gave me birth  
I shall be laid to rest,  
O Mother Earth.

## A SONG OF ENGLAND

SUN of a myriad morns of splendour, stars of  
unnumbered nights, divine  
With praise and honour that victors render to  
lords beloved of the battle line,  
Smile as of old ye smiled on England,—as ye shone  
in her childhood, shine !

Childhood strong with the perfect gladness  
breathed in the salt of circling seas,  
Childhood gay when the wild wind's madness  
beat round her Island sanctuaries,  
Childhood girt with a hundred charms, yet grave  
with a holier grace than these !

## A SONG OF ENGLAND

Ah ! but the soft hands plucked strange posies—  
many a thorn in their flowering set—  
Ruddy and white were the rival Roses, soon with  
rain of her weeping wet,  
And the Lilies fair she was fain to bind with the  
golden Broom of Plantagenet.

Sun of England ! but thou wast with her ! Stars  
of England, ye watched on high,  
Bade her uplift her clear eyes thither, and trace  
the lore of the radiant sky,  
Depths that quicken, and blaze, and quiver, with  
beacon-fires of her Destiny.

Then the dawn of her great decision shone, and  
shrivelled such love and hate  
As thrilled her till, on her wider vision, flashed  
the doom of her glorious fate,—  
All the waves of the world her paths through half  
the earth her Palatinate !

## A SONG OF ENGLAND

And she lingered and gazed while, slowly, one by  
one from her fingers fell  
The faded blossoms, forgotten wholly, for now  
the dreams of her heart foretell  
Dominions orb'd by a ceaseless noon, and after,  
the fields of asphodel.

Foam of the full tide's flood, and fleeting lustres  
caught from the cloudy wrack,  
These, with the self-same voice entreating as  
when ye won her in childhood back  
From the lesser hope and the meaner mood, turn  
her face to the sunward track !

Let this be, though through countless pages the  
blazon flare of her treasure trove—  
Though all the largesse of all the ages meet and  
glimmer her brow above—  
Let her point to Duty that waits and cries for  
lives laid down at the shrine of love.

## A SONG OF ENGLAND

By this alone she shall strive and govern, her soul  
grown sweet with its bliss and pain,—  
Toil and suffer beneath the Southern Cross, and  
the Bear, and King Charles's Wain,  
And ever her lovers shall know her nigh when  
they hear the throb of the distant main.

So I sang through a noon of Summer—sang  
because of the song in me,  
While nearer her footfall seemed to come, her  
mirrored face in a mystery—  
There, where the bright cliffs laced the blue, and  
the sunlight slept on the silent sea.

‘WHILE WE LOOK ON THE THINGS  
THAT ARE NOT SEEN’—S. PAUL

MID our life's ways, our transitory tents,  
Light of each common day, that dawns and  
lessens,  
Shows by innumerable sacraments  
The happy haunting of God's Presence.

But ours the wistful watch lest its faint touch,  
Falling in vain, withdraw, nor wait the pleasure  
Of proud self-will, that tarries not for such  
Guidance, unconscious of its pressure.

Enough for me that, haply, I have known  
This cordial ministry of help and warning ;  
And when my footsteps strayed in night alone,—  
While all the world acclaimed the morning,—



‘THE THINGS THAT ARE NOT SEEN’

That I have felt a lifting, at the least,  
Of my soul's load—a refuge from defiling—  
In the grave salutation of some priest,  
Or a child's quick delightful smiling.

## ON A DAY IN EARLY SPRING

‘ For joy she remembereth not the anguish,’

THERE is Spring in the air to-day,  
And the cry of returning life  
To Earth and her stone-cold clay,  
Death-struck in the winter’s strife :—

Spring in the air, and the stir  
Of a myriad slumbering souls,  
Wistful to waken when their  
Hour of ‘ Resurgam ’ tolls,—

Souls of colour and sound,—  
Spirits of field and fen,—  
All things prisoned and bound,—  
Slaves—and the souls of men !

## ON A DAY IN EARLY SPRING

What is this bliss, whose breath

Throbs through the heart of their dreams—  
Joy that is calling from death

The woods and the hills and the streams?—

Joy of great bells that beat,

With something diviner blent,  
As of grave young lips that are sweet  
From their first Sacrament :—

Joy that for ever wears

In the deeps of her steadfast eyes  
The passion of manifold prayers,  
And the beauty of sacrifice !

Spring ! through its sun-bright noons

Ever the sheep are sheared ;—  
Ever the sharp knife prunes ;—  
Ever the Cross is reared.

Yes ! but the world, seest thou ?

Is warm from the blood-stained fleece,  
Feeds from the wounded bough,  
Wins from the Cross its peace.

## ON A DAY IN EARLY SPRING

Come then, O gladness of Spring,  
    Lead where the daffodils bloom,  
And the forest-birds build and sing  
    By the door of a desolate Tomb.

Show where the Christ was laid,  
    How the hard rock, a-flower,  
Glow through the cypress glade ;—  
    Makes of the grave a bower ;—

Tells of a wonder that spake  
    Of old in the garden of God  
To hearts that were ready to break  
    For shame, and the stroke of His rod ;

That sank like the waft of a kiss  
    Through the groves of cedar and palm ;  
These, mid the death of their bliss,  
    Thrilled to ineffable calm ;

Thence, down the centuries' scope,  
    Whispered in sunshine or rain,  
Always—a tremulous hope,—  
    Always—a questioning pain,—

## ON A DAY IN EARLY SPRING

Till, in the glimmering hush  
And the splendour of infinite snows,  
First of all blossoms that blush,  
Reddened our Christmas Rose :

Till, from a Branch stripped bare  
The wine of the world was poured ;  
Till, to His altar-stair,  
They brought the Lamb of the Lord,

And from drawn Lips that must die  
To the Spring-wind soft on the hill,  
Sudden a sevenfold Cry  
Wailed o'er the earth, and was still.

Then, 'neath the paling west,  
They bare to the bier of the King  
The linen of His last rest,  
And the myrrh for His burying.

Heart sore wounded, and worn  
With the tale of thy toils and fears,  
Standest thou still forlorn,  
With the song of the Spring in thine ears?

## ON A DAY IN EARLY SPRING

Nay, then, bid thou the storm  
Of thy tears be stayed for a space,  
Watching that shrouded Form  
Pass to Its silent place.

Listen, It calls thee back  
To the prowess of patient strife,  
And the dirge of Its funeral track  
Is the chant of an endless life.

One with the sapling and vine,  
And the shrinking flock on the fell,  
God—by this sepulchre's sign—  
God has suffered as well.

Far fields flushed with the dawn,  
Nameless—yet breathing a Name,—  
Lilies that flood the lawn  
With their ripple of golden flame :—

Petals that think to part  
Soon at the sun's caress,—  
Copses radiant at heart  
With their shy primroses :—

## ON A DAY IN EARLY SPRING

All that has been when Love lay  
    Baffled at Death's dark gate,—  
All that shall be with Love's sway  
    Regnant and consummate,—

Echo the solemn surprise  
    Of Motherhood come to the Earth,  
Turning her rhythm of sighs  
    To a music of exquisite mirth.

For she sits and she sings awhile  
    By the sleep of her great First-born ;  
But she twines with a fathomless smile  
    The flowers for His Easter morn.

## THE SAINT

### A PORTRAIT

THERE was a waft of alien air,  
    Beneath the sun a sudden awe,  
And, step by step, with faltering care,  
    A Saint passed by. At first we saw  
Naught save a life's divine estate  
    Shrunk to a trembling and a sigh,  
World-wasted, since it sprang elate  
    To wed his winning poverty.

Only his eyes are depths undimmed  
    By any mirrored smoke of sin,  
His lips, like thresholds, purely limned,  
    To speak the house of peace within ;—



## THE SAINT

A tranquil bow'r, if one might guess,  
A shrine, not seldom visited  
By censer-sweet remembrances,  
And ghosts of happy smiles long dead.

All else so sore a wreck,—the mute,  
Wan athlete tottering to the goal,  
The frail feet, faintly resolute  
To track th' indomitable soul.  
Rest, heart low-crying, feet that bleed,  
Brave exiles from our soft content ;  
Bid us, tho' late, retrieve your need,  
And sing you back from banishment !

He looks a moment on our mirth,  
His tired eyes travel down our days,  
Then lift themselves once more from earth,  
And calm resume their God-ward gaze.  
How shall he sink to bliss so vain ?—  
Behind the veil this man doth sit,  
Splendidly eminent in pain,  
The Court of Heaven's Favourite.

## ON A CHRISTMAS BIRTH

I SING the gracious motherhood of Earth,  
I sing the fostering magic of the stars,  
And Love's sweet miracle of mortal birth,—  
When part the prison bars,

And a lone babe looks forth, and doth complain  
To find itself so far from that fair home,  
Whither afresh, through peril and much pain,  
It needs must roam.

Take heart, O tiny one, and, unafraid,  
Gaze up at holly gauds and evergreen ;  
And I will sing once more of Mary, Maid,  
Yet of all mothers Queen.

## ON A CHRISTMAS BIRTH

And thou shalt hear how in some wayside grot  
The King of Yule was born, Whose humble  
state  
Sheds its mild glory round each baby's cot,  
And makes it consecrate.

## A LIKENESS

I KNOW a far country where  
The sunlight kindles and dies,  
And the shadow lingers or flies,  
For the breath of the rain in the air,  
And the April mood of the skies.

And I know a child's face as fair,  
Which the Spring, at some sweet sunrise,  
Has kissed, as I think, unaware,  
Leaving its gold in her hair,  
And the gray of its clouds in her eyes.

Later, the fields shall dare  
Laugh for the shower's surprise ;  
And the face of my friend, as she lies?—  
Lo ! I look for the Summer-time there,  
And the end of her season of sighs.

‘ IS IT WELL WITH THE CHILD? . . . IT  
IS WELL ’

WHERE the hearts of all men, as the hearts of  
little children,

Love, and sun themselves in Love’s forgetfulness  
of pain,—

• Where the Homeland gathers in its cloud of  
homing pilgrims,

I shall meet and greet you, dear, and see you  
smile again :

See the smile and hear the voice that, wise, and  
very friendly,

Weighed and welcomed what of tribute reve-  
rently I bare—

Speech or silence, or a hand now and then found  
straying,—

But I think you understood its touch upon your  
hair ;

‘IS IT WELL WITH THE CHILD?’

For I think you sometimes guessed the passion of  
the pleading

That by secret, soundless ways went up to God  
for you,

Day and night to God, whose heav’n was sweet in  
your lips’ sweetness,

Shone about your brow, and made your wistful  
eyes so blue.

O my little priestess of an altar unillumined

By the lights that lighten round the glad path  
of a child,—

Once a Maid, they tell us, kept through hidden  
years and holy

Ever the white wonder of her girlhood un-  
defiled.

She, with dreaming eyes of prayer, discerned  
around her dwelling

Bliss of brooding sanctities, soft wings of angels  
furled,

And the Rose of some strange dawn that, rising  
far and faintly,

Should to sudden joyaunce flush the fair face of  
the world.

‘IS IT WELL WITH THE CHILD?’

So, with growth of service, grew the gradual awe  
intenser,

Deeper fell the silence in her separate shrine,  
Ev’n as when await their prince the courtiers of  
his presence,

And through hushed pavilions the approaching  
pomp divine.

Nay, but hers to lift no festal garland, nor for  
solace

List in bowers of love the lutes sigh falteringly  
and low ;

Nay, but hers a wreath at last of withered leaves,  
and music

Of a winter’s wind that wooed the dumb  
immaculate snow.

Then, amid the mirthless wastes, and fields forlorn  
of maying,

Thrilled the first clear notes of her Magnificat  
begun ;

She, a mortal Mother, bare God’s Self within her  
bosom,—

She, th’ immortal Maiden, sang the rapture of  
a Son.

‘ IS IT WELL WITH THE CHILD ? ’

This my story : do you seek, O child, ’mid sound  
and crying

Of Love’s greatest legend, what Love-whispered  
meaning yearned

Through the hallowed Yule-night, with its haunt-  
ing voice of viols,

Vision of the Virgin Born, and one bright star  
that burned ?

You shall find a better, dear, than poets’ rhymes  
can fashion ;

Faith shall teach her heavenward glance for  
each remembered loss,

Till, through blinding tears, you smile, and fall  
asleep contented,—

After storm the calm, and on your quiet breast  
the cross.

And, meanwhile, can I forget that unto me is given,  
By this hand grown warm in mine against the  
winter’s breath,

Yet a new companion to the bourne of best be-  
tiding—

Yet another comrade down the beaten ways of  
death ?



‘ IS IT WELL WITH THE CHILD ?’

But God send that where He builds beyond the  
dark a city

Golden as the delicate sunlight o’er that distant  
down,

I may see those pure hands with their mystic lilies  
laden,

And upon your temples trace the unconceived  
crown.

## OF A FRIEND

OH ! little hands and little feet !

Oh ! red, red mouth that smiled on me,  
And eyes so frank one could but meet  
Halfway the challenge of their glee !

As one who, in a banquet-room—

Soft radiance ringed with softer night—  
Steps sudden from the outer gloom  
Into the central rose of light,

So from the mist of men and things

That hems my flickering life around,  
Vague shapes and dim imaginings—  
Of fancy fraught, and empty found—

## OF A FRIEND

Face, hands, and feet, you dawned distinct,  
My sweet child-maiden, scarlet-clad,  
Your life with mine a moment linked,  
And, all unwitting, made me glad.

‘ Only a child !’ and ‘ Spoilt !’ they say—  
The elder-wise : ah ! not so rough !  
‘ Spoilt ’ is ‘ loved,’ spelt another way :—  
I helped the ‘ spoiling,’ like enough,

That Spring when (so it chanced) we three  
Were comrades—you, and I, and pain—  
Before you said good-bye to me,  
And, lonely, I passed on again.

## FROM A FAR LAND

CHILD and comrade, are you dreaming, all those  
weary miles from me,  
As you watch the faint sun gleaming 'mid the  
rain-gusts fitfully,  
Of a distant desolate shore, drenched and  
echoing evermore  
With the clangour and the streaming of the  
sea?—

Where the great sky-wastes unfretted with the  
far horizon merge,  
Save for some black silhouetted team at toil along  
the verge,  
And the bleak unlovely lands overlook the  
barren sands,  
And the ploughshare's wake is wetted of the  
surge.

## FROM A FAR LAND

Stern and chill our strand, and meagre of content-  
ment, though the maze  
Of your woodland breaks from leaguer of the  
March wind into praise ;  
Lone the rampired pathway lies round the  
low white promontories,  
Where of old I wandered, eager for your face.

Now it comes no more, nor smiling its frank  
fellowship is seen,  
And the heav'n, for strange defiling of storm-  
wrack and cloudy screen,  
Shows less radiantly blue, and the shadowy  
avenue  
Spreads a covert less beguiling in its green.

So I fancy ; for my senses, of your soft approach  
aware,  
Woke to blessed influences—to a world divinely  
gayer,  
'Mid whose gold of morn and eve watch the  
solemn Powers that weave  
What of children's fairness fences the All-Fair.

## FROM A FAR LAND

For no earth-light was it solely round your gentle  
days that burned ;

Nay, I read them humbly, slowly, as men read a  
sign discerned,

When, through invocations breathed, by the  
worshippers enwreathed

The dim wonder of a holy place is learned.

So, from schooling of your presence, in your  
wisdom grew I wise,

Drew of grace and truth my lessons from the  
speech of steadfast eyes,

In whose depths were secrets won from the  
joyaunce of the sun,

And the glamour of moon-crescents, as they rise:—

In whose depths (as waters hiding in some wilder-  
ness, though stirred

Yet by never a dawn-breeze gliding, nor the voice  
of any bird,

Still by charms ineffable can the immanent  
Morn foretell),

Broods ev'n now the bright abiding of the Word.

## FROM A FAR LAND

As the light that, none the less, is sure of conquest in the end,

Shall the touch of Life that blesses through long ministries descend,

With a whisper of God's way,—as the intimate fingers stray,

Smoothe and bind the sunny tresses of my friend.

Wait the sibyl years, declaring tranquil auspices of good,

Twining for your forehead's wearing its white crown of womanhood,

Till the appointed lips shall plead the sweet immemorial need,

Throned within the wistful daring of their mood.

After, as God will, our meeting : but the shadow must lie there

Of a festal day's retreating, whose thin fragrance thrills the air,

Ebbing irretrievably. Ah ! I know that you .  
can be

Nevermore, for gladdest greeting, what you were ;

## FROM A FAR LAND

But, in grave new bliss, Another ; lo, the drifting  
years ordain :

And this heart-loss owns no brother, finds no  
fellow to its pain.

Safe returns the swallow home, and the spring  
comes o'er the foam,

But the Child to the child-lover not again.



## ON THE DOWNS

### A THOUGHT

HERE the enormous splendour of the sky  
Meets the immensities of earth and sea,  
From whose great vision something wins mine  
eye—

A frail flower bowed beneath a radiant bee.

I am of spirit 'mid this glory of things  
Inanimate ; thus mark your tragedy  
Of a life spent,—while the noon laughs and sings,—  
O pale flower burdened of the tyrant bee !

So God, Chief Soul, Supreme Intelligence,  
Creating, loving, comprehending all  
The unmeasured marvels of Sound, Sight, and  
Sense,

By a child's tears is held in instant thrall.

IN MEMORIAM : H. R.

DEAD—'neath the sunshine of a summer's noon,  
And by the rippling of the glad blue waters—  
dead :

And carelessly the leaves and flowers laugh on,  
By her low head.

But in its strange new gravity, her face,  
To all their wooing grown indifferent,  
On some veiled wonder 'mid the untravelled ways  
Is awfully intent.

Dead—while her fields of Life were fresh with  
bloom,  
And ere the coming of its roses—dead :  
Oh, watch a little in the darkened room,  
By the white bed :

## IN MEMORIAM

Or linger, if thou haply hear the toll

Of a faint bell down leâgues of ardent air,

Then heav'nward lift, for Hilda's childlike soul,

A momentary prayer.

## ST. PAUL

LESS than the least of all saints, yet a vessel of  
choice—

Grace of God's paladin, grace of God's orator,  
grace of God's priest,

These are thine, blessed Paul; lift up thy heart  
and rejoice,

Though less than the least !

Set for a wonder, a sign, a beacon aflame,

Knowledge hast thou of all, nor needest that  
any should tell

Of the limitless spaces of light, nor whisper the  
shame

And oblivion of hell.

## ST. PAUL

Yea, for this day wouldst thou scale in a rapture  
the ramparts of Heav'n,  
Battling with dimly discerned hosts of im-  
palpable ill ;—  
Yea, and the next breaks the sob of the runner  
who sorely hath striv'n,—  
Ungarlanded still.

Yet ever thy voice was heard, ringing by river  
and grove,  
Till the sweet languorous isles, stung by the  
storm of thy breath,  
Thrilled to its anguish of yearning, woke to the  
wail of a love  
Stronger than death.

Ah ! how sudden sinks down the brave and confi-  
dent cry—  
Suddenly fade from thee those shores with  
their sunlight and foam ;  
Nothing is left save the love that traces now, with  
a sigh,  
Letters from Rome :

## ST. PAUL

Hearing whereof, they read, then ponder in  
prayer awhile,  
Sons of a vaster day, thy children, thy latest  
born,  
Cheerful, alert, unafraid, to thee their father they  
smile,  
Fronting the morn.

Happy Saint Paul, with those eyes of a nameless  
patience and pain,  
Winning a world outworn to the haunts of  
thine own heart's rest,  
Of whom it was said, 'To live is good,—and to  
suffer is gain,—  
But to die is the best.'

## LOSS AND GAIN

OH, saddest Manhood ! if, the glamour faded  
Of the fresh dawn of faith and conscious awe,  
It tire of spirit-toil, too vexed and jaded  
By the long lettering of the unfolded Law.

Lo ! as the merchant, weighing in his balance  
Gains of each day, is patient for the prize,  
Till the one pearl for which he piles his talents  
Light her pale ray for his adventurous eyes :

So must Man spend himself for Truth, and buy it  
With infinite pained surrender of the Past ;  
Yet smiles anon to feel his ways grown quiet  
With th' ineffable Presence come at last.

## A DIRGE

How is the beautiful and holy City fallen !—

Gates of glory, walls of wonder, towers of  
ancient pride ;—

Wake, O harp, to wailing through the halls of  
haunted silence,

Where, unwept, the daughters of Jerusalem  
have died !

Now no longer Love shall laugh beneath the  
kindling branches,

When the blossoms broider for the Spring their  
woof of fire,—

Now no more to sunbright shrines, from hoary  
summits flaming,

Morn and even shall upstream the white  
innumerable choir.



## A DIRGE

Spring is fled, and Summer flown, and all the  
lea forsaken,

Where the shepherds chanted, and the drowsy  
flocks have lain ;

And the gloaming drowns thy rayless turrets, and  
the casements

Echo but the wind without, and drear mono-  
tonous rain.

Say, dost thou rehearse thy nuptial night—recount  
thy watchers,

Faint, like eager lovers, with the longing in their  
breast ?—

Nay, thy vestal lamps are dead,—undocked thy  
doors,—nor ever

Shall the tossing torches light thy Bridegroom  
to His rest.

Lo ! upon thy ramparts the ominous wings as-  
semble,

Drifting from the darkness in their melancholy  
hordes ;

For the Voice hath spoken from the Throne amid  
the shadows :

‘ Take away her battlements ; they are not the  
Lord’s.’

‘NOW ABIDETH . . . HOPE’

THE grave is cold ; but the flowers above  
Whisper downward their news of love.

They see the sun, with his kindly face,  
Leading us all to God through space.

They watch by night the planets at play,  
That praise the Lord till the Judgment Day.

They hear the wind, in the tops of the trees,  
Singing of marvels overseas.

The nests breathe cheer, and the byres content ;  
Blithe are their hearts, and confident :

‘ Courage !’ they cry, ‘ till at cockcrow sounds  
The Voice of Christ by the burial mounds.’

‘NOW ABIDETH . . . HOPE’

The moon shines now with a slanting beam ;  
The carter's lantern awakes his team.

The drowsing farm, that was dark and dumb,  
Lifts through the upland its sigh and hum.

The pines are red at their ranked spear-tips,  
And the East unveils her apocalypse

Of a rapturous city, spire on spire,  
And the waters beneath are a glass of fire,

Like to the vision of great Saint John ;—  
And only thyself art sleeping on,

Till the shadows, brother, depart from thee,  
And from each low cell in thy cemetery.



The wind, high gossip by roofs and vanes,  
Has seen strange sights through the casement  
panes :—

Morning and eve, white children bands,  
That kneel to the Father with folded hands ;

‘NOW ABIDETH . . . HOPE’

Pale grave faces that students wear,  
True priests’ lips of perpetual prayer ;  
And wrinkled brows that are conning o’er  
The simple wants of the aged poor.

To God the light of their lifted eyes  
Leaps like a flame of sacrifice ;

To God their music of myriad words  
Soars like the flight and flutter of birds ;

A cloud that floats Heaven’s ways along,  
Winged with desire, and quick with song.



Why linger His steps Whom priests foretell—  
King and Comforter—Child as well ?

Secret gold of each cloudless morn,—  
Hidden sweetness of babes unborn,—

Grace of each maiden’s heart of joy,—  
Life of the blissful limbs of a boy,—

Soul of the world's divinest years,—  
Fount of the world's repentant tears,—

Victim of every cross hewn free  
From boughs of the first forbidden tree,—

Priest of each hourly offered-up  
Broken body or brimming cup,—

Faint in the passion that never dies  
From lips of men and from women's eyes ;—

Come, O Christ, for the Face of Thee  
Is dawn in the forest, sun on the sea.

Come, for Thy crescent radiance glows  
O'er the ice-bound cliffs and the roseate snows ;

And all that is glad shall greet Thy day,  
And sorrow and sighing flee away.



This is the dream that, early and late,  
Lays strait siege to the ivoried gate.

‘NOW ABIDETH . . . HOPE’

This is the wisdom that snowdrops bring  
To quiet garths in the green of Spring.

This is the Hope that upward steals  
Where the deathless pæan like thunder peals,  
And the thrilling of harps is a wind that sweeps  
Through the surge of the singing that never  
sleeps.

Great twin voices of joy and dole,  
Chant and litany, chime and toll,

Each God hears : all Heaven hides not  
The mother that bows by her empty cot ;

And the tremulous hands that grope for Him  
Win through the shroud of the seraphim.

Palms for the bridal ! They rise, they throng,  
Signs of the Advent !—Lord, how long

On the star-strewn rampart, before it light  
Thy legions forth through the final night :—

Ere the dews of Thine awful dawn be shed  
On the tranquil fields of the blessed dead,

‘NOW ABIDETH . . . HOPE’

And Love be master of Life's unrest?—  
Hush, my heart, for He knoweth best.

When thou seest the scars in His orbèd Hand,  
Thou shalt read—shalt worship—shalt understand.

## TO-DAY AND TO-MORROW

AN hour to watch, an hour to pray—  
To-morrow is for praise and rest,  
And which the sweeter, who can say ?  
God knoweth best.

Yet whoso in the Cross hath won  
A refuge, secret and austere,  
No other home beneath the sun  
Holds dear.

I wonder, on that far faint morn,  
When April turns to lovelier May,  
What souls new-waked will sigh, forlorn,  
For the lost Yesterday !



## UNRECOGNISED

THEY saw thee not, and it was well  
They did not see ;  
Some speech, some commune should have chanced  
'Twixt them and thee.

And in such commerce there would steal  
From out thy soul  
The fellowship that seeks no part,  
But asks thy whole.

The stillness of that intercourse  
Informed thy breast  
With presage of thy future peace,  
Thy final rest.

## UNRECOGNISED

Not lightly fling aside the touch  
Of that sweet thrall ;  
Not lightly for a moment's gain  
Renounce thine all :

Lest haply, what thy careless mood  
Has cast away  
Be sought with tears, and sought in vain  
Another day.

Nay ; hold thee fast by God, and bid  
Thine eyes be dim,  
Thine ears be deaf to all awhile,  
Save Heaven—and Him.

## FROM THE WOODS

I HAVE seen—and the vision is fair,—  
I know—and the knowledge is sweet,—  
Through glades that are tranquil and green,  
Down paths that are hushed and aware,  
The way of His Feet.

Yet am I, on the breast of the hill,  
And I, in my forest retreat,  
To Him, as He passes, less nigh  
Than you in the stithy and mill,  
You in the mart and the street.

I am given but a thrill, but a breath,  
But a Footfall sudden and fleet,—  
You, 'neath a fog for your heaven,  
In lanes of linked labour and death,—  
*You hear His Heart beat.*

## A PASSING GLEAM

So be thou content, if thou know, at the dusk of  
the day,  
Whate'er it has witnessed of duty misdone or  
abhorred,  
Thou still art the stronger at moonrise, aware that  
the way  
Of thy feet was, for even a moment, the way  
of the Lord.

Content, for some space of self-conquest, short-  
lived yet complete,  
Thou hast found, some new coign of thy heart  
set at rest—it is well ;  
By so much thou art nearer to Heav'n, to the  
Christ, and thy feet  
Are the farther from Hell.

## IN A FIELD OF POPPIES

A FIELD that is scarlet with poppies—how like to  
the vision outspread  
Behind us, around us, while onward the path of  
our pilgrimage led—  
'The field with its blossoms encarmined,—the  
Church with her martyrdoms red !

Oh ! barren the soil of the hillside ! Oh, sere  
and forsaken the lea !  
But it stoops, 'mid all torment of noontide, to the  
utmost that ever can be  
Of glory and grandeur and gladness—the glitter-  
ing smile of the sea.

## IN A FIELD OF POPPIES

So barren the world of the martyrs—so sad was  
the shore of their tryst,  
Yet still for their solace of sorrow one melody  
sang and sufficed—  
The plaint of palm shadowy waters, that mirror  
the city of Christ.

From the wind-withered breast of the poppy—  
by the breath of the wilderness blown,  
The seeds of new joyaunce are scattered—new  
harvests of splendour are sown,  
Till the distant waste places are wondrous with  
treasures the tempest has strown.

Even so the saint dies and is buried, and silent  
his sepulchre stands ;  
None heed it ;—but hearts lifted higher and  
lightened, in far-away lands  
Bear witness how wide was the blessing that fell  
from the crucified hands.

## IN A FIELD OF POPPIES

For aye is the life of the martyrs the Brother-  
hood's mystical bread,  
And desert, and drouth, and undoing—by these  
is your loveliness fed,  
O field with thy flowers that art sanguined—  
O Church that art sweet with thy Dead !

## THE WAYFARER

HE lingers by my door each day ;  
I hear Him passing down the street ;  
And, though I heed not, nor obey,  
He follows still on tireless feet,  
With love that will not turn away,  
And eyes surpassing sweet.

And I could see, if I but chose  
To gaze an instant from the fears,  
The little hopes, and cares, and woes,  
That round the circle of our years,  
Five Wounds—each Wound a thirsty rose,  
Unwatered by my tears.



## THE TEMPTATIONS

RE-READ IN THREE DEVOUT EPIGRAMS

WITH hearts of stone Life's wilderness is stored ;  
Yet, since Thou goest fasting to Thy bed,  
In pity on Thy sweet soul-hunger, Lord,  
Command these stones that they be made Thy  
bread.

---

'Cast Thyself down': through hazard of dark  
days  
Adventure Thee with our humanity ;  
Thy very Godhead still shall keep Thy ways,  
And give Thine angels charge concerning  
Thee.

---

## THE TEMPTATIONS

This is no Devil's dowry : 'tis *our* part  
To meet th' Immortal Aspirant, read then  
His Love's credentials, and, with broken heart,  
Yield to a Brother-man the crown of men.

## LENTEN VERSES

OH ! painful path of Penitence !

Oh ! road surpassing steep !

How oft, upon thy drear ascents,

Woeful for my extreme offence,

I stumble and I weep !

Yet still, in midst of grief, I take

This comfort to my breast,

That, while my contrite moan I make,

There steals a voice to soothe my ache,

And sing my heart to rest.\*

Oh ! painful path of Penitence !

Oh ! road surpassing steep !

My Saviour climbed these rough ascents

To bear for me His Lent of Lents

And win the wandering sheep.

## THREE MEETINGS

### IN THE HOUSE OF SIMON THE LEPER

Go, wash with tears the feet, the weary feet—  
Thou'lt not refuse Him, when  
The eyes that lure thee from the loathèd street  
This charity of cleansing dare entreat  
Of Mary Magdalen.

### AT THE CROSS

Oh, wash with tears the feet, the bleeding feet,  
Nailed fast by sinful men :  
There let those tears, like blessèd rain-drops, beat,  
And make thy worn heart young and white and  
sweet,  
Mary the Magdalen.

# THREE MEETINGS

## IN THE GARDEN

*Noli me tangere* :—awhile repeat

Thy *Miserere*, then,

At Christ's Assumption of His bridal seat,

Clasp thou once more the wounded, radiant feet,—

Saint Mary Magdalen !

## A NOON OF HOLY WEEK

OH, thou sunshine ! Oh, thou Springtide ! Oh,  
thou whisper in my breast,  
From your silence and your splendour, of a secret  
half confessed—  
Haunts of unattained contentment, incommuni-  
cable rest :—

Ye are shadows of the unseen—your embrace is  
as a kiss  
Hidden lips of Love revealing ; yet a Love that  
finds in bliss  
Such as yours its chosen symbol, and its image—  
whence is this ?

## A NOON OF HOLY WEEK

Dare my heart respond in measure, lift itself from  
cloud and night,  
And compassionate no longer with a sorrow out  
of sight,  
Dream awhile by dreaming waters of a limitless  
delight ?

Nay, I only see the travail that so often seems in  
vain ;  
Nay, I only mark how mutely, while the world  
recks up its gain,  
My Creator hangeth dying 'mid His Universe of  
pain.

## THE OLD QUESTION

### I.

THE perfect Love that casts out Fear—  
Shall that be near when Death is near ?  
Say, shall it shine unclouded yet,  
When life's low sun has well-nigh set,  
And, through the weird unwonted gloom,  
Gapes the wide entry of the tomb ?

Oh ! stand, dear Love, in that dark space,  
The hope of dawn upon thy face ;  
Oh ! breathe, kind Love, the charm that bids  
The tired eyes droop their drowsy lids ;  
Then, when the last farewell is said,



## THE OLD QUESTION

Watch thou and pray beside our bed,  
Because the strange sad night has come,  
And all the house is bleak and dumb,  
The latest footfall dies away,  
And lo ! our life is yesterday.

Forgive, O Love, if we should weep  
A little ere we lie asleep—  
Thou Who hast agonized as well  
Under a hurt irreparable.  
It was no foretaste of the spear's  
Red treason drew Thy rain of tears,  
And bowed Thee fainting to the sod,  
O Fellow-man, that yet art God ;  
But that last liveness wrung from Thee  
Thy wail of mortal agony.

Wherefore Thou wilt not blame nor chide  
If lingeringly we lay aside  
Our few poor treasures—loves and joys—  
Yes, Lord, the half are broken toys—  
But still the dearer for the sake  
Of each remembered loss and ache.

## THE OLD QUESTION

Not least Thy love to us, but best,  
For that bright wound within Thy breast.

We love the warmth of homely days,  
To wander down sweet human ways,  
And hear the children's laughter ring,  
And feel the baby-hands that cling ;  
And list at eve the toilers' feet  
Make music in the darkening street ;  
And the glad chorus smile to catch  
An instant, with the lifted latch.

Ah ! shall we find such cheer as this,  
Passing the unknown Portalice ?  
Once the grim shuttered house attained—  
The hooded archway's secret gained—  
The door's slow sliding, whence explore  
Eyes of what shrouded Janitor ?—

Then first our failing gaze shall win  
The knowledge of what waits within :  
No scope to turn, no way's escape,  
Whate'er descried of sound or shape ;

## THE OLD QUESTION

Or loathed, or loved, alike impend  
The embrace, the scrutiny that end  
Travail or frolic of each soul  
At its inevitable goal.

Therefore we turn with calmer breath  
To Thee, th' Interpreter of Death,  
Who, from his momentary stress  
Of unendurable caress,  
Hast come, with soft familiar speech,  
And Hands outstretched, a wound in each,  
Of glad, grave lovers touched and seen,  
Sole Emigrant from Death's demesne.

### II.

Thou, Whose prerogative and plan  
Are ever to ennoble man,  
To bid him banish idle tears,  
And infidelity of fears ;  
Whose help is his, yet not one whit  
Beyond his present need of it,—  
So that, in death's despite, at last,  
His conflict and his peril past,

## THE OLD QUESTION

He may rise slow to his full height,  
A King, a Victor, in Thy sight :  
Lo ! from the dark of eastern seas,  
The night far spent, there lifts a breeze,  
That cries a little, and is still,  
For the sweet wonder of Thy Will ;  
Then, from the waste ways of the skies  
The march of solemn ecstasies,  
With pennons of the Dawn unfurled,  
Streams o'er the frontiers of the world.  
Now audibly Thy pinions beat  
Through brightening voids, O Paraclete !  
Now shall Thy voice—ah ! how my soul  
Leans forth in longing—breathe the whole  
Of comfort, where ye float and flee  
White foam-clouds, o'er the foamless sea !—

Nay. For its cheer the heart must spell  
Slowly from sign and parable :  
And, by the unearthly touch surprised,  
Loses it, half unrealized—  
That something veiled, yet nearly known—  
Nigh—and yet nigher—ah ! 'tis flown !

## THE OLD QUESTION

An instant more, we could have pressed  
The utmost secret, drear or blest,  
From the mute Lips—and now again  
'Tis but their glory and their pain  
That brood above us, hushed and grand.  
Yet take the omens. Sky and land,  
Irradiate from the night's eclipse —  
In these ye smile, O sweet dread Lips !

Yea, and from clashing discord springs  
Deep-toned consent of divers strings ;  
And through sun-siege and drought-duress  
Laugh the God-clothed anemones ;  
From Winter's womb forth gleams the grace  
Of each green pasture, each flower-face,  
And from lives wintry, spoiled, defiled,  
The pure new mystery of a Child.  
Pause there: with brows palm-sheltered yearn  
And gaze, and evermore discern  
Life, the strong Warden of the Dead,  
Sphinx-eyed,—yet rainbow-raimented.

And ye, who with soft whisperings  
Of Hope, and fragrant wind of wings,

## THE OLD QUESTION

Win by these lucid shores and seas  
Hearts imperceptibly to peace,  
Spirits of Dawn, ye sing a home,  
Where never curfew chimes the gloam  
Nor wanes the godlike day, for there  
Is God.

I give myself to prayer.

## SONNETS

### PREMONITIONS

To-day I thought the Spring came suddenly  
And breathed an instant down the ways. Oh !  
fond,  
Desirous fancy ! Still, with frosty wand,  
Winter compels thorn-bush and lilac-tree  
To their reluctant slumber : Woe is me  
For this white world inexorably in bond,  
These mute snow-muffled pastures, and, beyond,  
Th' interminable shadow of the Sea !

Yet, as through children's dreams, there softly  
thrills  
The mother's kiss of waking, so declare  
Sweet half-heard voices blown about our hills  
A coming dawn, when Spring shall everywhere  
Light the clear flame of countless daffodils,  
And loose her larks upon the silent air.

## THE NEARER VISION

Lo ! now when travellers, thro' their ordered days  
Glance at the pageant of the importuned East,  
And dream they read her soul, she hides un-  
guessed

Her bright deliberate counsel, till the ways  
Are void once more, then, from each secret place,  
Summons her blissful shepherds, her rich-fleeced  
Flocks, and her wonted quire of bard and priest,  
To sing and sacrifice before her face.

So from loud shores and populous waters flees  
The Spirit of the flood : afar she finds  
Precipitate refuge where the tempest blinds  
Her perilous bowers ; and, wilful, holds in these  
Clandestine court 'mid chanting of the winds,  
And seething laughter of the nomad seas.



## NIGHTFALL

Not always comes the twilight hour of Fate  
With menace in its footfall ; and, believe,  
The sunset skies of that portentous eve  
Not always frown. There are who calmly wait  
On brink of Life's last verge, and note the great  
Gray night creep up, ambiguous mists achieve  
Their vague dominion, while, from far beneath,  
Waves of th' encroaching flood reverberate.

Yet sometimes to a watcher by that strand,  
Whose dauntless eyes explore the baffling range  
Of the dark Sea of Mystery and Change,  
The wind of Death, by which his face is fanned,  
Blows keen exhilaration, crying strange  
Secrets in language of Another land.

## IS IT PEACE ?

1899

RUSSIA, who in thy sombre solitude,  
Far from the mirth of nations, and their mart,  
Standest disdainful, terribly apart—  
Shall England fawn upon thy fairer mood,  
Dream that the thunderous brows no longer brood  
A recompense for loss, and agelong smart—  
While, lapped in whitest lawn, the withered  
heart  
Forgets its thrice despoiled motherhood ?

Her pitiless, patient eyes rehearse the way  
Of vengeance—all the windows of her soul  
Flung wide to list the storm of her array  
Beat on the gates of Ind, demanding toll,  
Ruthless, complete, on that fell reckoning-day,  
For Alma and grave-sown Sebastopol.

## TWICE-FOUGHT BATTLES

WHY do we still keep silence, in whose breast  
Throbs the sore sting of such discouragements—  
Such strange belyings—of that finer sense,  
The clear sane dignity of soul, professed  
Our English heritage? Think you, we rest  
Pillowed on Sloth, or conscious Impotence  
Or, worse, wait dumbly with the old defence,  
'We fear the people. So they love it best?'

Nay, but because by winter fires sat we,  
Upholding each his facile shibboleth,  
Content the inglorious armoury to wield  
Of idle words, while, imperturbably,  
Where raced and lashed th' invisible hail of  
Death,  
*He* rode in the high places of the field.

## ON A PICTURE BY FORD MADOX BROWN

(‘CHRIST WASHING THE DISCIPLES’ FEET’)

THIS is the picture. Lo ! the Christ hath bent  
To that last service, Love’s epitome ;  
The hour has come, that all accomplished be,  
And, knowing that He came from God, and went  
To God, He riseth from the Sacrament,  
And lays aside His vesture (it is He  
Who robes the earth each Spring from sea to  
sea),  
And the ringed faces hover, hushed, intent.

Reaps Love no harvest ? Doth the scene demand  
But mere appraisement, blame, or laud ? Not so  
The wiser children think, who silent stand  
To gaze—then pass more softly to and fro,  
Because of the wan Lips, the worn white Hand,  
The averted Eyes’ unutterable woe.



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